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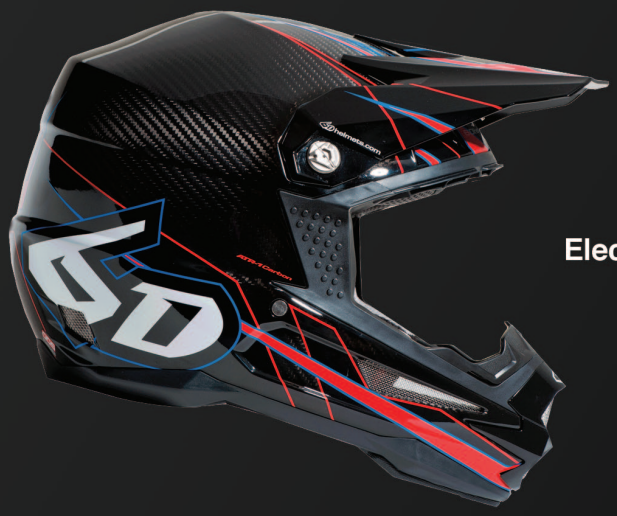

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Chad Reed

European Vacation

Story Geoff Meyer and Eric Johnson images Zanzani, Redeye and Archer

When Monster Energy Yamaha rider Chad Reed decided to come and race two GP's in June everyone sat up and listened. While Reed might not be the same rider he was between 2001 and 2011, he is still a capable top ten guy, and more importantly a legend of the sport. His performance in the opening round in Matterley Basin was a top 15 spot, which is what many expected. Going into Mantova with a little more experience Reed was still just going there looking for some fun, and not get hurt.

SHIFT
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A family holiday back in Australia was more important, and rightly so. Eric Johnson caught up with Reed prior to the trip and Geoff Meyer during the trip, both talked to the legend, and asked him about his trip to Europe.

Motocross Illustrated: Chad, you have a bunch of money, titles and a great family. What makes you continue to travel the world?

Reed: Life is about living, and everything you said apart from my family it is material things and for me its more like I still enjoy it. Motocross I watched Glen Helen and Hangtown, but I don't miss being there. I never want to stay home and even now when I am not racing, I am in Europe and the kids and Ellie are in Australia with family. That is us, that's me and Ellie, we are doers, travelers. My kids are pretty wide open and the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

Motocross Illustrated: I think travel is the best lesson in life.

Reed: There is more to the world than the bubble you live in. Of course, you have this thing in the back of your head and you don't want to fail. For me, I see my friends the people I grew up with and they are doing the same things as when they were growing up. I have been fortunate enough to have the life I have and the success I have had.

Motocross Illustrated: You are riding around outside the top ten in Matterley Basin, how does that feel?

Reed: It sucks; I mean on the Saturday it didn't matter. I was around the top ten and then we had a technical issue and I don't know if there was a rock getting caught in the rear brake, or we had a technical issue. I was right there on the Saturday. The pace isn't that bad, its more trying to find the rhythm.

Motocross Illustrated: How did you find the speed of the GP guys?

Reed: I think the level in Europe and America is always about the same, but the way to achieve it is very different. The European way comes more naturally to me. Sometimes I am like I remember this. The tracks form differently. The euro riders like road racers, they get on it coming out of the corners, so it gets really rough coming out of the corners, it gets really choppy. In the US its full gas and wide open and a handful of front back, so coming into the corner there are big bumps, and they get into a rut and ride through it. In Europe you can get into a rut and I am expecting to turn, but the rut goes really long.

Motocross Illustrated: Having not done Motocross for a long time, how was it as far as your condition?

Reed: I think my physical fitness is totally fine, but the muscle memory for 35 minutes of pounding, especially from the Matterley track, is lacking. The riding, the feeling on the bike and the pace was fine, but the grind in two days of motocross is a lot different than what we do in one day in Supercross. Hopefully this will shock the body and make Mantova a bit easier. But honestly the pace doesn't seem too gnarly, and my feeling on the bike is the best I have had outdoors in a long time.

Motocross Illustrated: I remember the first time I met you in 2001, I thought, this kid is pretty cocky, or maybe just really confident?

Reed: I think the cockiness is a bit mis-read. I mean you sort of put a wall up, and what I did wasn't the normal for Australian riders. I mean Leisky did it, but in my time it wasn't something Australian riders were doing. I had a team manager in Jan de Groot who had a lot of confidence in me and if I rewind

MXGP
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15 years I remember looking at a map and didn't even know how to get to Spain for the first round.

Motocross Illustrated: You must have some very cool memories from 2001?

Reed: I was only there a year, but during that short year I learned a lot, I grew up quickly. I was young and everybody treated me like I was one of their own. When you're so young and those people were so nice and looked after us… Yeah, it was fun. We have great memories from that one year. I'm looking forward to it. Like I said, the GPs obviously have changed a lot in the last fifteen years. It's crazy. It trips me out that it has been fifteen years since I've raced a GP. Obviously, I've done quite a few Motocross des Nations and for the most part those races events are run by the same people and with the same format and all that kind of stuff, so it's not like I haven't been over there and been involved in the same running of everything.

Motocross Illustrated: You were only 19 years-old when you did that 250cc Grand Prix season. To leave Australia at that young of an age and base yourself in Europe to try and become a champion, man, that's a pretty big gamble, isn't it?

Reed: It's kind of one of those things that, yeah, it was a gamble, but for me it was an opportunity of a lifetime, you know? I did it how I wanted to do it. I, for the most part, ruined the relationship with my parents and did a lot of things that I wanted to do. I wanted to do it my way and go a race GPs. I took my girlfriend with me at the time, Ellie, and just did things differently. It changed me for life and kind of made us who we are today. For me, it wasn't a gamble; it was just an experience of a lifetime. I just always wanted to go and race on a world stage. Obviously, my first goal was supercross because that was my first at the time, but the U.S. wasn't hiring Australians at the time so I had to go and make a name for myself in the GPs. As it turned out, it was an amazing experience. I'm glad I took the opportunity that I did, but it would have been nice to maybe stay another year. Jan De Groot begged me to stay and try to contend for a World Championship, but for me at the time, I just wanted to get to the U.S. and race supercross. Yeah, looking back on my time, it would have been cool to have given my shot at a World Championship.

Motocross Illustrated: And there can be no doubt that the motocross fans of Europe are going to thrilled to see you race in Europe.

Reed: Yeah, I think at least from my social media pages, everybody is very excited. England has a very strong moto following and we never get to go there. There are no off-season supercross races there and now it seems like they don't really have those anymore, so I think those fans are starved a little bit to see supercross and supercross riders. It seems like they're really excited about this. Italy is probably one of my favorite countries in the world and I'm excited. I'll be based there and I'm going to hang out there. I'll bounce back and forth between riding at Maggiora and Yamaha Rinaldi. They're the factory Yamaha team of Europe and they're based in Parma. And if I have time, maybe I'll go over to Tavullia and see Valentino Rossi a little bit and ride the Ranch. Yeah, I'll kind of be going back and forth and I'm not sure if our schedules will meet.

Motocross Illustrated: I'm not just saying this because

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I'm talking with you right now, but to my way of seeing things, overall and all things considered, you're the most popular motocross racer in the world right now. I think it's good for the sport that a racer at your level can go around to different nations and meet and race for the fans. Agreed?

Reed: Yeah, I mean for me personally, it's a lot to take on and I'm as competitive as ever. I mean I want to do well, so I take that on a little bit. Being popular – you know I came from Australia and I went to Europe and then I came to America – I do have a world following and it's nice to be able to get out and do this. That's what I love about MotoGP. For me, I grew up in Australia, so anytime you wanted to do anything, you had to travel and you had to get on a plane and you had to go overseas. For me, I think that's fun. I think getting on a plane and seeing new people and new fans and new places is always exciting.

Motocross Illustrated: Do you watch MXGP on television or online?

Reed: I have, actually. Yeah, I've been keeping up on it. For the most part I keep on it more than the AMA stuff. It looks like that series right now is really competitive. You know I haven't raced Tim Gajser and I haven't raced Romain Febvre, but for the most part, the rest of them I've raced numerous times at the des Nations. It seems like that whole crew racing over there has stepped it up and I think Gajser and Febvre have lifted the level up. It seems like the pace is high. It's like it is here – you really need a good start to be up front and try to go with the good guys. You know I haven't really ridden motocross to my full potential, or how I think I can ride it, so I'm just hoping to go get good starts and make it fun and to ride motocross the way I know I can. That's really the biggest thing for me. I'll be happy just to go and tear up some outdoors and ride the way I know I can. That's what I'm most looking forward to.

YAMAHA
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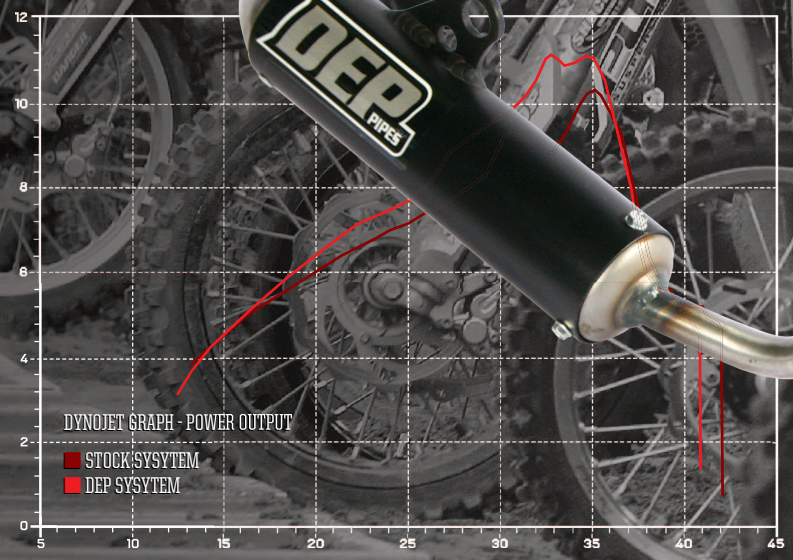

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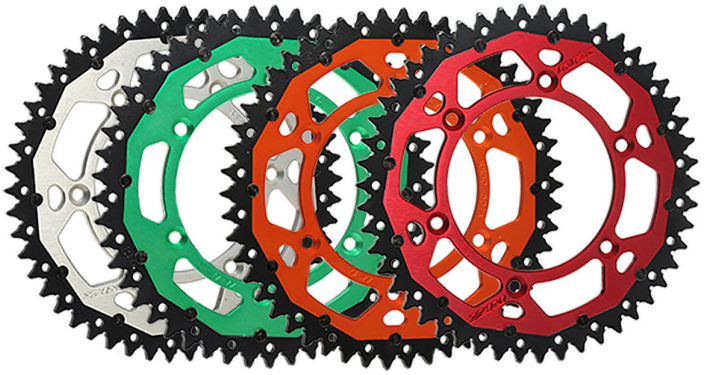

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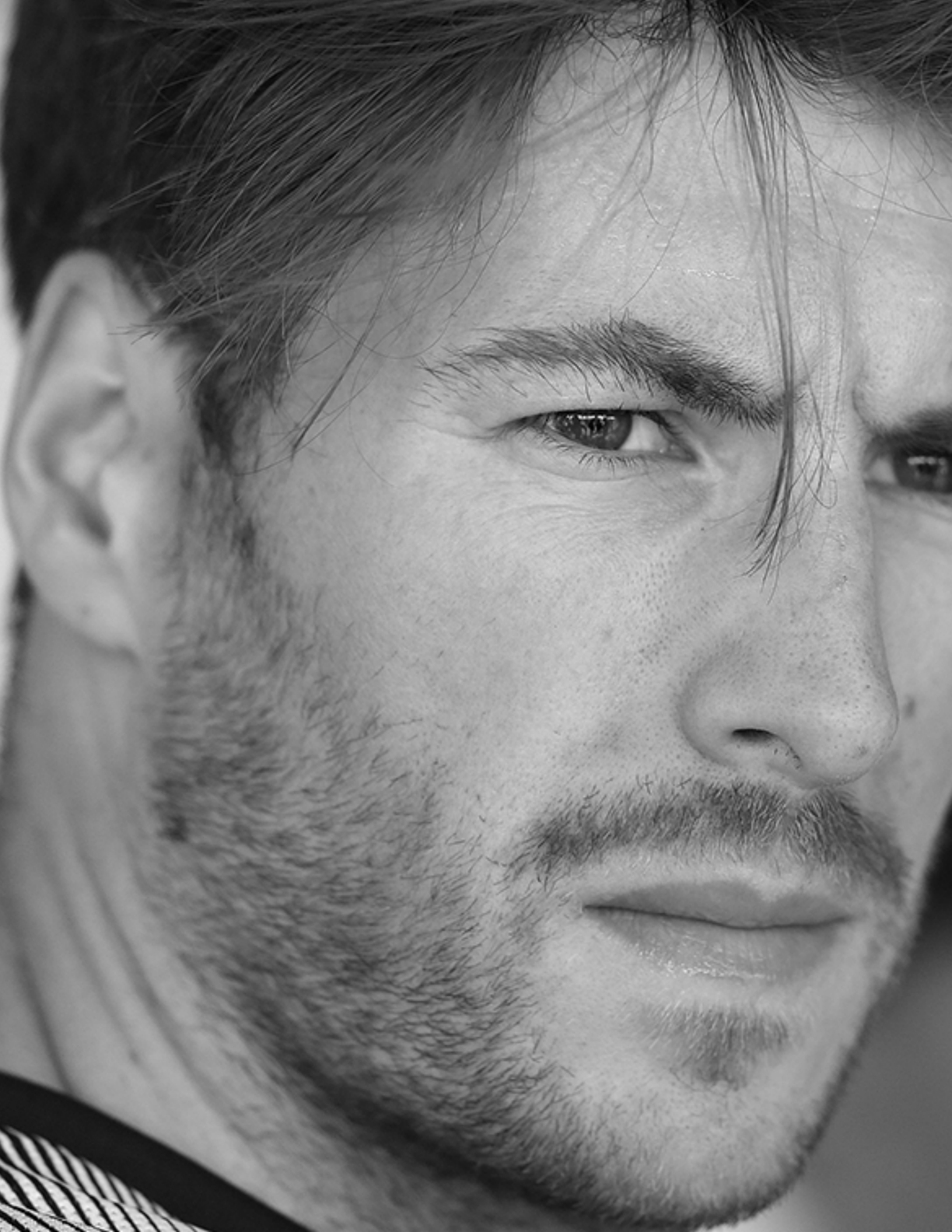

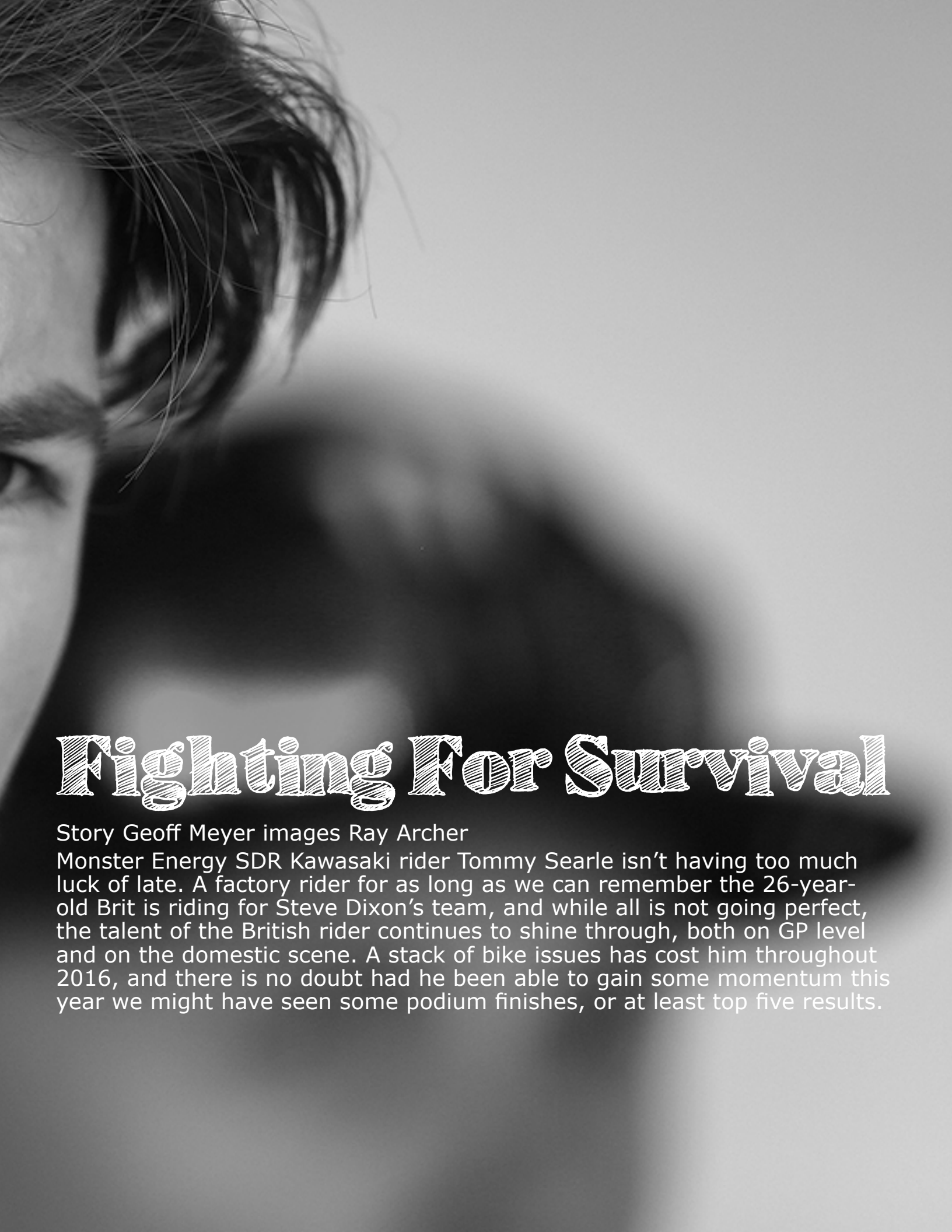

Fighting For Survival

Story Geoff Meyer images Ray Archer

Monster Energy SDR Kawasaki rider Tommy Searle isn't having too much luck of late. A factory rider for as long as we can remember the 26-year-old Brit is riding for Steve Dixon's team, and while all is not going perfect, the talent of the British rider continues to shine through, both on GP level and on the domestic scene. A stack of bike issues has cost him throughout 2016, and there is no doubt had he been able to gain some momentum this year we might have seen some podium finishes, or at least top five results.

A handful of injuries in the last few years haven't helped the career of Searle, a rider who has 14 Grand Prix victories to his name, and only Antonio Cairoli and Clement Desalle have more (from riders in the MXGP class). You can be sure Searle will make progress in the second part of 2016, but he will need a little luck on his side.

Always looking the part, and decked out in his new Answer Racing riding gear, Searle looked in good form, and no doubt we will see him up front in many races in 2016.

Searle is the last home rider to win a GP in England and that victory in 2012 must have seemed miles away as he struggled through the pack in this year's event, although as always he tried to take the positives out of the weekend.

"It was nice to race my home GP, to see so many fans and try to spend some time with them as they gave us amazing support. It's been a really good weekend, but it's a shame that the rain came for the second race. I was happy with the first race, then in the second one I had some good laps but then the rain was so bad that I had troubles with my goggles; I slowed down too much as I didn't want to take them off, but I should have thrown them away… In the first race I had a good speed, I know I can do it and I just hope that I make it happen soon."

Two weeks earlier in France Searle had bike issues due to a damaged rear brake. Another crash and down in the points wasn't how the British rider wanted to leave the St Jean d'Angely circuit.

"Four laps into the first race the rear brake line was damaged and I couldn't stop at the bottom of a hill so I crashed. I thought it was a stone at first but when it happened again I realized what had happened. I tried to continue but it was just too dangerous to ride a track like this with no rear brake so I had to stop. I got a good start in the second race but I made a small mistake which dropped me from fifth to eleventh. I got back to sixth again before I had more problems with the rear brake again; there were only

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two laps to the finish this time so I carried on to finish ninth."

Recovering from a minor injury Searle went into Spain with some confidence, but again crashes and misfortune played its part in his weekend.

"This week was the first time I've been able to practice since I hurt my meniscus and my knee five weeks ago as I needed to let them recover, but coming here I didn't felt good and I struggled all week-end. In the second race I got a better start in tenth or eleventh but then I hit another rider in a down-hill and crashed and hit my head again, same as two weeks ago. Things seem to go wrong at the moment; I'm trying to do my best and I think a lot of problems come from the starts."

When the season started in Qatar three months ago Searle was excit-ed for his season, knowing he has done everything possible to be at the very top of the MXGP points.

"I probably felt the best I have felt in a long time really. Going to America to train in the winter was good for me. Last year I probably did a little too much in the pre-sea-son and was riding the same track every single day in Rome. Rode a lot of different tracks in America, then rode some different tracks in England. Went to Spain with Justin Morris the week before Qatar, and that was better than I expected. I feel more relaxed than I have in a long time really. For me, like I said I felt really relaxed going into Qatar and I figured a podium was possible, but was also happy with two top ten finishes. I have had some injuries and everyone looks so close. I know I am a consistent rider normally, I always was in MX2 and I was in my first year in MX1. I never finished worse than a sixth place and I believe I am a better rider than most in the MXGP class and I put in a lot of hard work. I know I can run at the front and I need to be consistent again and ride relaxed, enjoy myself more."

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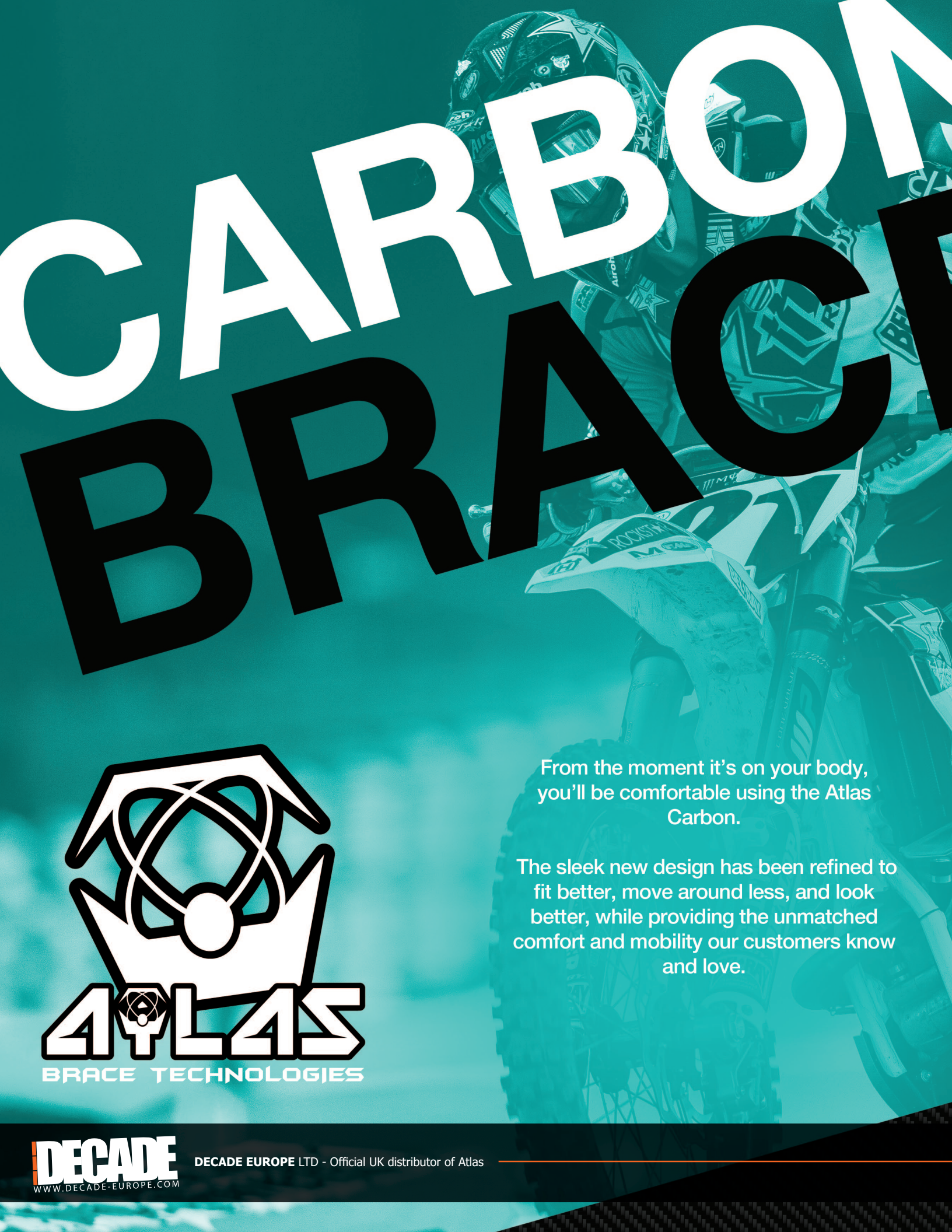

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THE RISE OF MXGP

Story Geoff Meyer images Ray Archer and Bavo Swijgers images

Giuseppe Luongo knows the value of the American market. It isn't about AMA vs FIM anymore for the Italian businessman, but it's about good business, and just as the American companies like Monster Energy, FMF, Parts Unlimited, FOX Racing, GOPRO, and many more have set their eyes on the European market, Luongo knows that America is the perfect place for the FIM Motocross World Championships to expand their market. Several major changes are happening in 2016, with two USGPs in America, the MXoN in America in 2018, several leading American riders have made it clear

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come to Europe full-time.

Last weekend in England, and this weekend in Italy American legend Jeff Emig joined Paul Malin for the commentary of the GP's. In a masterplan to open up the gap between American and Europe the knowledgeable voice of Emig, speaking to his American public is closing the gap. Having multiple AMA Supercross and Motocross champion Chad Reed also racing in England and Italy made it all the more exciting for the American fans and Luongo knew that.

We asked Luongo about this, and also about the USGP's coming up in a couple of months.

Motocross Illustrated: Giuseppe, having Jeff Emig and Chad Reed in England last weekend, and in Italy this coming weekend. It seems like a great marketing plan as the American public is becoming more and more excited for MXGP. Having Jeff (Emig) here to do the commentary obviously suited the American public.

Luongo: America is a very important market, not only for us, but for the whole world. We have the majority of our sponsors are American's and our product becomes more and more known in America, and having Jeff Emig here, it is better for the American people to understand our series, and it will create some interests, because as you know he is well known and has a big history in Supercross in America, he's also a former MXoN rider, and he knows us well.

Motocross Illustrated: But did you bring Jeff because of the interest America has in Chad racing in these two GPs?

Luongo: No, it just happened that way. Having Chad in England and Italy, that is also great. Our goal is still the same,

to make the world championship grow and make it better known. We are investing a lot on the media side, especially social media, where it grows very quickly, our Facebook numbers goes up day by day, really unbelievable. Jeff isn't linked to Chad being here, it was already on the program and we will try and do more events with Jeff. It is also a nice combination with Paul (Malin). They have history, and they have a lot to tell from their racing experiences, they can see more than us normally as former top level racers.

Motocross Illustrated: When you read riders like Eli Tomac, Adam Cianciarulo, Justin Barcia, Cooper Webb and many more writing on their social media how much they are looking forward to racing the USGP events, and then you have Barcia mentioning he wants to come here and race Lommel, or even a complete season, Chad racing here. It seems like exciting times for MXGP.

Luongo: What is interesting, is the fact, you know the MXGP has reached a high level, the quality of the rider in MXGP is very, very good, and this will bring the interest. Also the fact to the relationship with the MXGP world and the American motocross world is better. In some ways before there was a wall between, and I don't know if this was created on purpose, but it happened. Remember when the MXoN was cancelled in America and there was a lot of tension. We were not involved then, but there was a big gap between the America and Europe.

Motocross Illustrated: Seems like that gap is now gone?

Luongo: That gap is now gone and the relationship between the teams in America and Europe is very close. Kawasaki, Honda, Yamaha, of course KTM and Husqvarna, they all work together and the dialogue is now open and that is important, because it is stupid to close that gap, because it is two small worlds and the gap is not good for the riders or the teams. If we all work together it makes it easier to get the riders all racing together. The riders now have much more choice to where they want to go, because it is easier now.

Motocross Illustrated: Working together can only help everyone I would think? We all want the best motocross racers racing together.

Luongo: The direction is very positive and we recognize that Supercross is a big sport and if you like Supercross then you must race in America. If you like motocross, then you must race in Europe. The Supercross made by Feld and the motocross is made by us.

Motocross Illustrated: Motocross of Nations, where will that go for the next five or so years?

Luongo: The next two are already settled with Maggiora and Glen Helen. We will have France again in I think 2020, and Maggiora is 2021. We have free places for 2018 and 2019 and those places should be taken by Assen and Matterley Basin. We have to decide on how those two will be, maybe Assen is 2018, but it could also be 2019.

Motocross Illustrated: Is MXGP where you want it to be?

Luongo: MXGP now is how we dreamt it could be, and a lot of this is because of the structure of the EMX championships and also MX2. You see the EMX races and if you see the MX250 times of these guys, the top four in EMX250, they could easily race inside the top ten in MX2. It's important to bring these young guys into the top level, but give them the best structure to get there. Maybe Tonkov, or Anstie can do what Febvre and Gajser have done. MXGP is just unbelievable and having Jeffrey there would be awesome.

Motocross Illustrated: What about the Supermotocross event in Germany in October?

Luongo: The work for the SMX in Germany is really going well. We have the guarantee that all the top MXGP riders will compete, riders like Cairoli, Herlings, all the top riders and we are working with the manufactures to have some America riders in the teams. This event will be crazy, because all the teams will have riders to win, because the MXoN maybe we have three teams can win, but in the Supermotocross we will have all teams can win it.

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DAY OF POWER

Story Geoff meyer image Kawasaki and Yamaha

There is no doubt, the two biggest motocross races of the year (outside the MXoN) will be the two USGP events in September. Bigger than Matterley Basin, or Lommel, or Washougal, or Steel City or any other round of the AMA of FIM championships. Bigger because FINALLY we will see a real AMA vs FIM battle. What we have all be hoping for for years and thanks to the GP promoters Youthstream and their relationship with Monster Energy, this dream is getting closer and closer.

While FIM and AMA championships being decided give us a lot to be happy about, the USGP in Charlotte and the USGP at Glen Helen have for the first time this year a good mix of AMA and FIM riders going head to head.

Of course all the leading GP riders will be there, and as we mentioned last month Eli Tomac was signed to race, and now that he has officially mentioned it on his social media account we can all get a little excited. Can you imagine Tomac vs Gajser!!!! Or Barcia vs Febvre!!! Or Anderson vs Cairoli!!!!

How about AMA's leading 250 rider Joey Savatgy up against Jeffrey Herlings!!!! Other names on the list are Cooper Webb, Jeremy Martin, Adam Cianciarulo and many more. It is expected that probably five top ten from the 450 class and five top ten from the 250 class will line up against the Grand Prix specialists.

Team America will have already been decided by then, and a very good chance that the whole Team USA will be at these events, it makes for a very exciting event.

At present the only big names missing will be Ken Roczen and injured Ryan Dungey. Let us all hope Roczen can return to GP racing for this one race and make it the celebration of all

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the best riders in the world at the same circuit, going head to head for individual honors. It doesn't get any better than that does it?

Charlotte which won't be 100% like a GP circuit, and given the area the track will be made might even be a little supercross styled, the American riders might have a slight advantage, but then looking at the aggression of riders like Gajser and Febvre, who knows what will happen.

Glen Helen will of course be a big advantage for the American riders, but again, speed and big jumps are two things both Gajser and Febvre love.

I for one can't wait to see what the outcome is, but be sure, most of the Monster Energy sponsored riders will be on show, plus a long list of American riders who just want to experience racing against the best from the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Just like it used to be in the 1980s!!!

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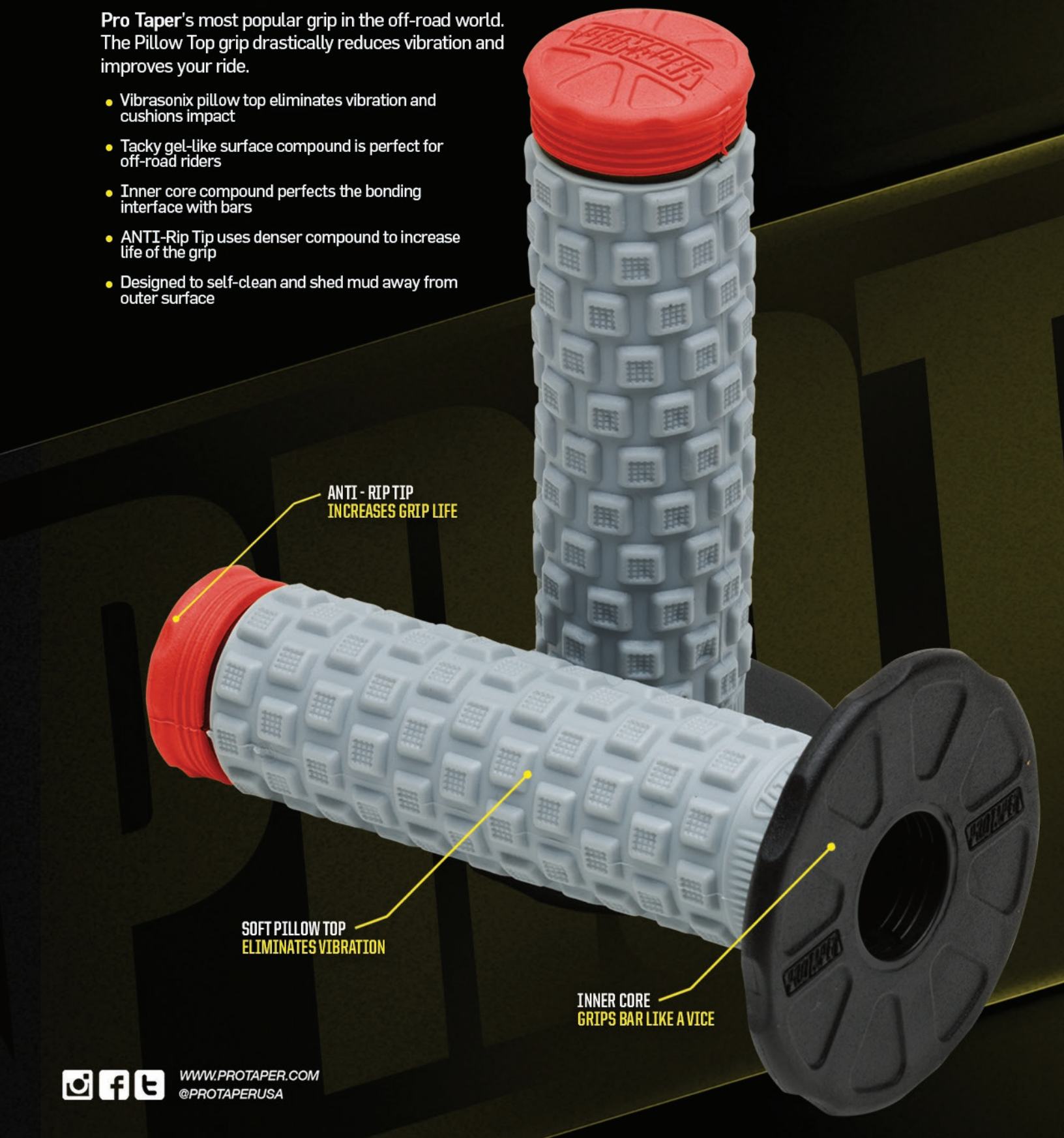

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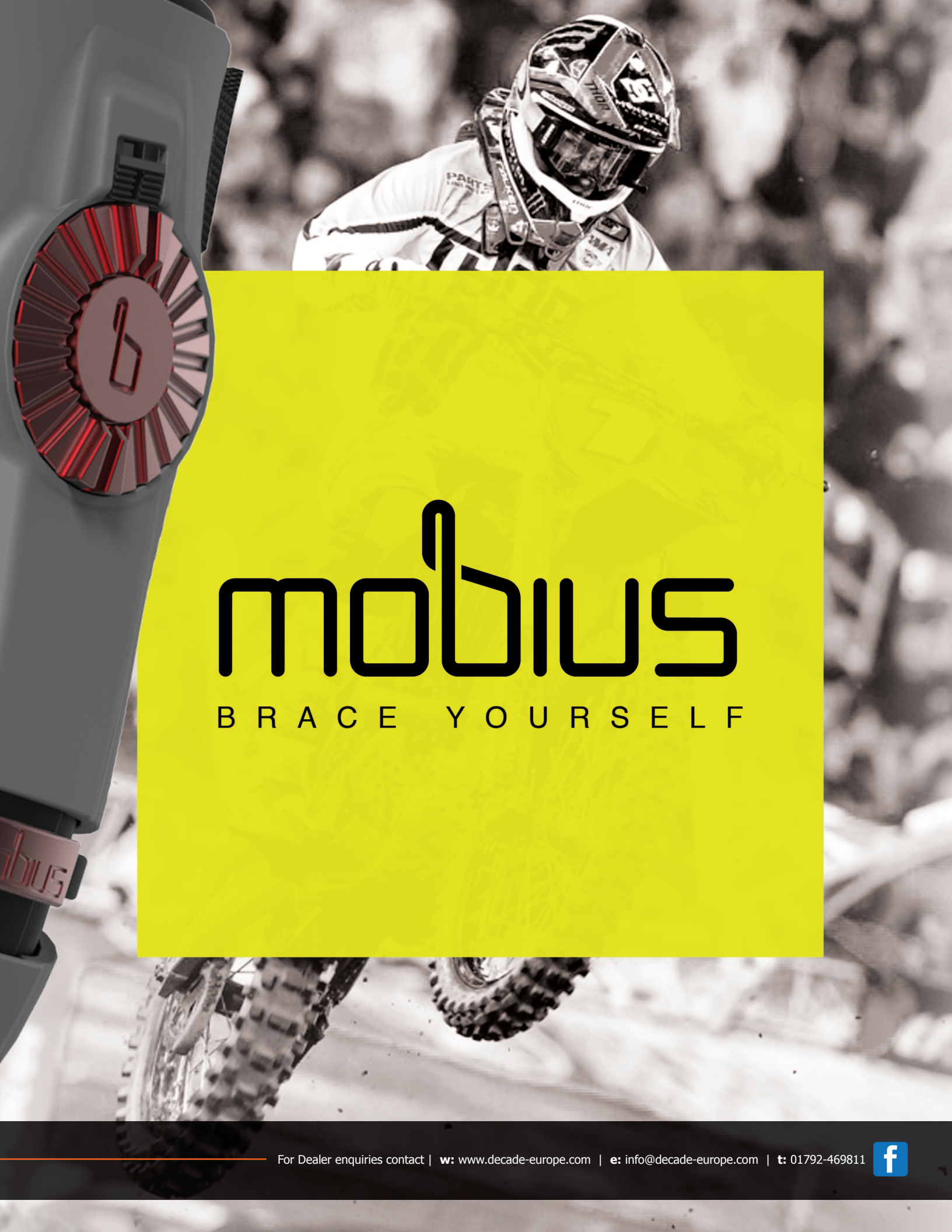

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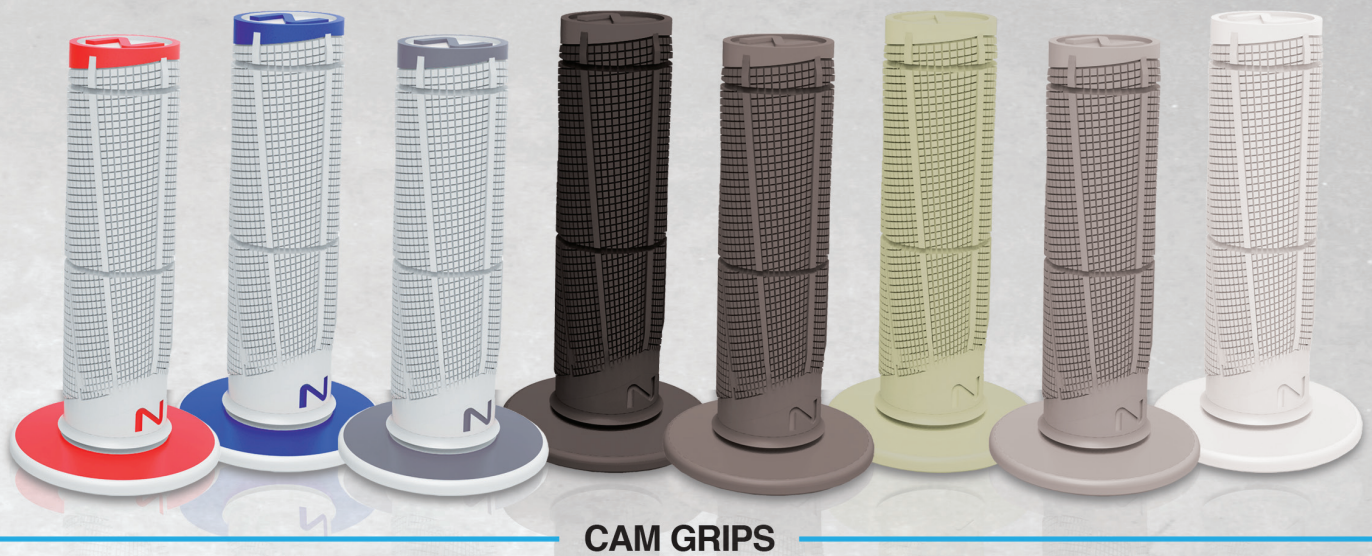

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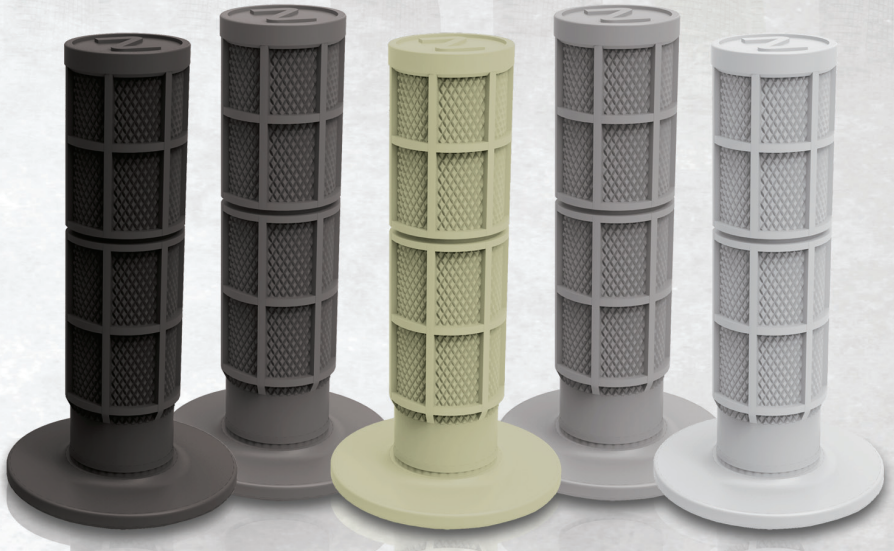

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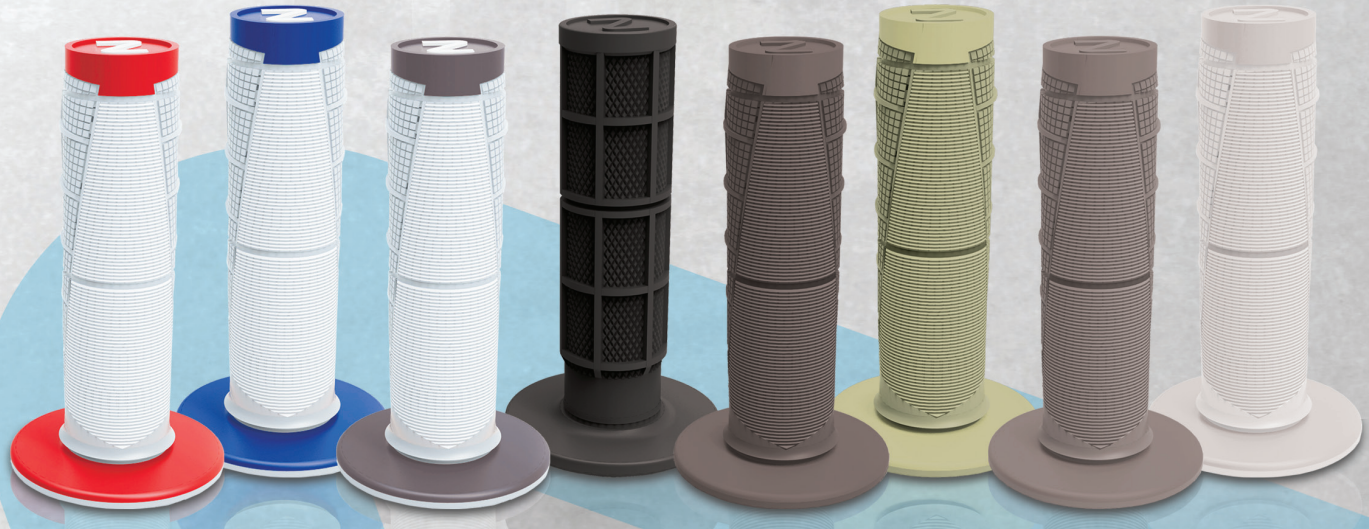

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